

Mr. NORWOOD. Mr. Speaker, tonight is part three on the judges of Madison County, Illinois. As I promised last week, I am back on the floor tonight to talk about a place that has the dubious distinction of being America's number one "judicial hellhole," Madison County, Illinois.

Mr. Speaker, they do not give out awards like the number one "judicial hellhole" from the American Tort Reform Association to just anyone. No, sir, only a court that continually misapplies civil laws, regularly violates fundamental constitutional rights of defendants, and caters to the interests of opportunistic trial lawyers can get a recognition like that. Sadly, Mr. Speaker the Circuit Court of Madison County, Illinois, got this distinction the old-fashioned way; they earned it.

Tonight, Mr. Speaker, I want to continue a story I started last week on one of the ways they earned this awful award by trashing someone's first amendment rights. I stood on the floor last week, and I told the Members about the former Attorney General and U.S. Court of Appeals Judge Griffin Bell and his experience with Madison County. I told the Members that, at a public forum in April of this year, Judge Bell said that counties like Madison County are a serious "stain on our system," meaning the judicial system. I also told the Members that Judge Bell called for an investigation into the administration of civil justice in Madison County. I finally told the Members, Mr. Speaker, that the wrath of the "judicial hellhole" was felt the very next day when Judge Bell and his firm were barred from appearing in their courtroom. But as Paul Harvey might say, what I did not tell the Members, Mr. Speaker, was the "rest of the story."

Hold on to your hat, Mr. Speaker, because, not long after that outrageous act by the Madison County Court, the St. Louis Post-Dispatch reported that a Madison County judge closed his courtroom to report his warning to cover a hearing about a fee dispute between prominent local trial lawyers. See, Mr. Speaker, as it turns out, the hearing was likely to include arguments over the lawyers' share of fees stemming from a very large class-action settlement, and for once, dollar amounts would likely be released regarding the sizable sums of money that these greedy trial lawyers stood to pocket.

So what happened? Well, you guessed it. The Madison County judge simply refused public access to the transcripts and exhibits from that hearing. Yet, once again, free speech lost, and trial lawyers won.

Mr. Speaker, the message from Madison County Circuit Court judges is simple: We have absolutely no respect for the first amendment. Folks speaking out against our brand of civil injustice should expect intimidation and retaliation, and finally, when court is in ses-

sion, no one is safe unless of course he is of their trial lawyers.

Mr. Speaker, last month, I wrote a letter to U.S. Attorney General Ashcroft asking him to formally investigate the judicial hijinks taking place in Madison County, Illinois. To my surprise, one of the Madison County trial lawyers, a Mr. Randall Bono, took time to ask in a local newspaper, why in the world would someone from Georgia "have an interest" in Madison County?

Mr. Speaker, that is pretty easy. When sleazy trial lawyers like Randall Bono retire when they are 42 years old, because they have pocketed millions of dollars through frivolous lawsuits, when a local court decides to hear cases from around the country it has no business hearing, when the local judicial system stops being a public trust and becomes a private trough for greedy trial lawyers like Randall Bono, when these and countless other injustices are allowed to continue anywhere in this great Nation, it is not a local issue, Mr. Speaker; it is a national issue. And this Congressman from Georgia, for one, has had enough.

Mr. Speaker, let me make this loud and clear to trial lawyers like Randall Bono and corrupt judges of Madison County: They may try to hush up, but I am coming after them, and I cannot and I will not be intimidated on these issues.

SMART SECURITY AND DISABLED VETERANS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Ms. WOOLSEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, the Bush administration is shamefully neglecting the men and women who serve in the United States Military, even as they return home from a war in Iraq, having lost arms, legs, other parts of their bodies, to suffer forever from other physical or mental disabilities such as post-traumatic stress disorder.

In August of 2003, when I spent some time at Bethesda Naval Hospital where I was recuperating from back surgery, we were faced with and I met with the wounded soldiers because I visited them while I was in the hospital, the wounded, who had come home forever changed by the war in Iraq. Meeting with these soldiers and their families and seeing their injuries gave me a firsthand look at the true horrors of war. I became more committed than ever that our government should cover all the expenses of any injury that results from war. But that is just not happening.

The disability benefits and health care system that currently assists 5 million American servicemen and women has become so overburdened by the addition of over 26,000 wounded soldiers from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, is now woefully incapable of providing the benefits and services that were promised before those individuals

went to war. Currently, there is a backlog of more than 300,000, and let me say it again, 300,000 service-related claims, and that number is increasing every single day. And since President Bush shamefully relied on thousands of National Guard and Army Reserve soldiers to fight in Iraq, these veterans now deserve veterans benefits, too. It is only appropriate.

Just as President Bush failed utterly in his planning of the Iraq War, he also failed utterly in planning how the Veterans' Administration system would address the hundreds of thousands of soldiers returning from that war. The cowboy mentality of the Bush administration is quite clear: Shoot first, ask questions later, even if asking those questions could have saved lives.

Worst of all, some of our soldiers still are not getting the necessary equipment that can save their lives; the advanced body armor that is capable of stopping bullets from assault rifles; armor for tanks to prevent the destruction of U.S. military convoys; and the water equipment to keep them hydrated in the scorching desert heat. Parents are sending that equipment to their kids, buying it here and sending it to them.

The failure to give this equipment to each and every soldier is particularly shameful considering that, last November, Congress passed legislation to fund the war effort to the tune of \$87 billion. That is on top of the \$78 billion in supplemental funds that was appropriated in March of 2003. Yet reports show that billions of those dollars are being misused, misappropriated and even stolen in Iraq.

And, now, the President plans to reprogram \$3.4 billion of last year's \$18.4 billion supplemental, using it for military purposes instead of for Iraq's reconstruction. So, now, we are forced to pilfer money that was supposed to pay for infrastructure needs for the Iraqi people.

How many more soldiers have to have their limbs shot off before this administration will wake up? How many more soldiers have to die for a President's mistake? There has to be a better way. There has to be a better way than this, and we must fully support the thousands of soldiers who sacrifice to serve and protect America.

That is why I have introduced H. Con. Res. 392, a SMART security platform for the 21st Century. SMART stands for Sensible, Multilateral, American Response to Terrorism. SMART security treats war as an absolute last resort. It fights terrorism with stronger intelligence and multilateral partnerships, and it controls the spread of weapons of mass destruction with aggressive diplomacy, strong regional security arrangements and vigorous inspection regimes. SMART security means equipping our troops with the tools that are essential to their survival and then helping them with proper health care once they get home. But the hawkish Bush administration, which quickly led this country

to war, is failing in helping men and women in uniform when they get out of war.

EXCHANGE OF SPECIAL ORDER TIME

Mr. WELDON of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to take the Special Order time of the gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. COLE).

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Florida?

There was no objection.

STEM CELL RESEARCH

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. WELDON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. WELDON of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I come from the Sunshine State of Florida, and I rise tonight to shed a little sunshine, speak out some truth regarding the facts on stem cell research and specifically President Bush's position on stem cell research. And I would like to highlight some of the inaccuracies, misstatements and lack of candor that is coming from presidential candidate JOHN KERRY.

Senator KERRY's statements are notable for their sweeping inaccuracy. And as a physician who has formerly and still does take care of patients suffering from diseases like Alzheimer's and diabetes mellitus, I am very concerned that these statements are creating a false hope on the part of many people who suffer from these conditions. And, further, I am very disturbed by the fact that it appears as though the Senator is trying to exploit their suffering for his own personal political gain.

Senator KERRY has repeatedly stated that he intends to lift the Bush ban on stem cell research. What he does not tell us is that there is no Bush ban on stem cell research. Indeed, just this past year, under the Bush administration, some \$300 million has been spent on adult stem cell research, and on embryonic stem cell research, there has been about \$35 million spent. The facts are simple, and they are basically this: This body, the Congress of the United States, passed a ban on Federal dollars being used for research that involves the destruction of a human embryo.

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Interestingly, Senator KERRY has voted for that, it is in the Labor, Health and Human Services bill, and he has voted for it I understand repeatedly; and that is where the ban is. It is actually in a bill this body passed and that Presidential candidate JOHN KERRY actually voted for. He is now criticizing President Bush for something that he actually voted for.

So what is the truth? What is really going on? Well, this body voted for no funding on any research that involves the destruction of a human embryo.

When you do embryonic stem cell research in humans, you have to destroy a human embryo in order to do that research. You have to take stem cells out of that embryo and, in the process of doing that, you destroy it. This is not illegal in the United States. It is perfectly legal to do it. The debate is exclusively over Federal funding of it.

Now, what President Clinton did is he played a very clever game around the intent of the law. He allowed these embryos to be destroyed in outside labs, and then the embryonic stem cells were shipped over to the NIH and he allowed Federal funding to be used for that.

I, along with others, felt that President Clinton was violating the law when he was doing that. And we asked him to stop, and he did not. Ultimately, George Bush came into office, and this was one of the first significant biomedical issues that the Bush administration had to wrestle with, and the decision was made that they would stop doing that. They would essentially stop being complicit in violation of the law and they would comply with the law.

So what is exactly the controversy here, you might say? Stem cell research, embryo stem cell research, what exactly is going on is very, very simple. We have been using adult stem cells, and adult stem cells are stem cells from our own bodies, in treating people with diseases for years and years and years and years.

I have in this chart next to me on my left an example of a person who had bad rheumatoid arthritis, and this is something we call a rheumatoid nodule. They were treated with adult stem cells, and you can see in this photo that nodule clears up, the rheumatoid arthritis goes away.

This is another chart of the same person. It may be a little bit hard to see, but this is before the treatment, the joints were very inflamed and red. You can see a nodule here on the thumb. Then after an adult stem cell treatment, it all clears up.

There are some people who feel that these embryonic stem cells will be better at this kind of treatment, but it has never been done. Nobody has ever taken an embryonic stem cell and treated a human being for anything.

What I believe Senator KERRY wants is he wants Federal dollars to be used for embryonic stem cell research in humans, even though it has never even been successfully done in animals. I think this is the wrong thing to do, and I think Mr. KERRY needs to retract some of these misstatements that he has been making.

GREAT VICTORY FOR FARM LABOR ORGANIZING COMMITTEE IN REACHING LABOR AGREEMENT

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. MURPHY). Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Ohio

(Ms. KAPTUR) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, I am proud to speak this evening on behalf of the people of our congressional district in Ohio. All Members like to rise when something really significant has happened, and I come from a part of America, northern Ohio, that has always fought for the betterment of the working conditions of people, across our region, across our State, across our country, and indeed across the world.

This past week, and I will place the article in the RECORD, something truly historic has occurred, something that deserves mention in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD of our Nation, and that is the great victory by the Farm Labor Organizing Committee of Northwest Ohio and its magnificent leader, Baldemar Velasquez, in achieving the first labor agreement on behalf of thousands and thousands of migrant workers across this continent, for the first time giving them the ability to earn a decent wage, to have decent working conditions, and to contract for their labor, to begin to get rid of the corruption that surrounds individuals who move around this continent, exploiting people and forcing them to pay bounty if they want to go back to their nation, forcing them to pay a bounty if they want a job, and then ignore them, ignore their welfare when they are working with no rights at all.

Every year, 9 million people come to the United States of America, most of them illegally, to work in our fields, picking blueberries, cutting cabbage, working in meat plants, working in food processing facilities with absolutely everybody sort of closing their eyes to their welfare, everybody making money off their backs, and yet those workers having no standing.

This past week, through this incredible agreement, the Farm Labor Organizing Committee has finally given the most exploited people on this continent the first platform to stand on. I could not be prouder to represent any group of people than this group.

I can remember as a young college graduate coming back to my community in Ohio and wearing a button that said FLOC, the Farm Labor Organizing Committee, and it had the words "viva la causa," long live the cause. Indeed the cause has finally been victorious across this great continent.

This contract that the workers have gotten will cover over 8,000 workers, dozens of growers, and hopefully begin to ameliorate the terrible conditions forced on workers on this continent because of NAFTA, all that came before it and the worsening conditions that came after, as millions of Mexican farmers were thrown off their land and became a mobile group of people across this continent with no place to live, no decent wages, coming into our market, trafficked by among the most despicable people that have ever lived.

I am just so proud of the Farm Labor Organizing Committee. This is the first